

# PRESS RELEASE

## Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

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CONTACT:  
Dena Graziano (202) 226-6888

### CONYERS INTRODUCES THE "GUN SHOW BACKGROUND CHECK ACT OF 2002"

Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee joined Danny Davis, other Members of the House, and the Pacific Center for Violence Prevention in a press conference to introduce the "Gun Show Background Check Act of 2002" and to release a new study detailing the failings of Project Exile-type programs.

Conyers issued the following statement regarding the legislation:

"Considering the many recent tragedies and threats of violence we have had in our nation's schools and recent reports indicating that the U.S. gun industry sold numerous guns to members of Osama bin Laden's "Al Qaeda" terrorist network, the importance of enacting legislation that will promote a safe and sound environment can not be overstated.

Many people are eager to point a lot of fingers of blame for the problem of gun-related violence. There is certainly much responsibility to be shared, and it seems clear to me that we need to adopt a multi-pronged approach in addressing this problem. Ultimately, we need to establish state and federal programs that will address environmental factors which contribute to gun violence; provide desperately needed funding to community-based violence prevention programs; and develop a system for sharing enforcement information and technology. But first and foremost, we must consider the problem of unwanted access to guns.

The bill I am here to introduce today, "The Gun Show Background Check Act of 2002", goes along way towards limiting the unwanted access to guns by closing the loophole in federal gun laws that allows criminals to buy firearms at gun shows.

As many of you know, under current law federal firearms licensees are required to maintain careful records of their sales, and under the Brady Act, to check the purchaser's background with the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) before transferring any firearm. However, a person does not need a federal firearms license - and the Brady Act does not apply - if the person is not "engaged in the business" of selling firearms pursuant to federal law. My bill corrects these deficiencies by (1) requiring background checks for all firearms sales at gun shows, (2) defining gun shows to include any event at which 50 or more firearms are offered or exhibited for sale and (3) by improving firearm tracing measures - in the event that a firearms becomes the subject of a law enforcement investigation.

Now, some of my colleagues have advanced other proposals aimed at closing the gun show loophole, however several of these proposals are riddled with many loopholes themselves. Among other things, they would weaken the Brady law by shortening background checks to 24 hours - thereby allowing more than 2,200 additional felons, fugitives and stalkers to purchase guns in an 18 month period; they would allow states to limit the search of individual records to "disposition information" - which, as you may know, excludes mental health records and restraining orders; and they would create an unprecedented exemption that would allow a gun trafficker to sell thousands of guns from his home without conducting any background checks.

These proposals also unwisely place a great emphasis on enforcement programs such as "Project Exile" which - in effect - ignores the easy access that criminals have to guns, increases the likelihood of recidivism, weakens families, damages state and federal justice systems and disproportionately impacts communities of color. Indeed, in Richmond, Virginia alone, over 90% of those prosecuted under "Project Exile" were African-American - leading one district court judge to state with, "little doubt that Project Exile has a disparate impact on African-American defendants."

It's time for smarter, better gun safety enforcement. The bill we are introducing today will move us in that direction."